

LAVENDER Volume 20, Issue 507 To Have & To Hold: The Fall 2014 Wedding Issue October 30-November 12, 2014

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The Fall 2014 Wedding Issue

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OCTOBER 30-NOVEMBER 12, 2014

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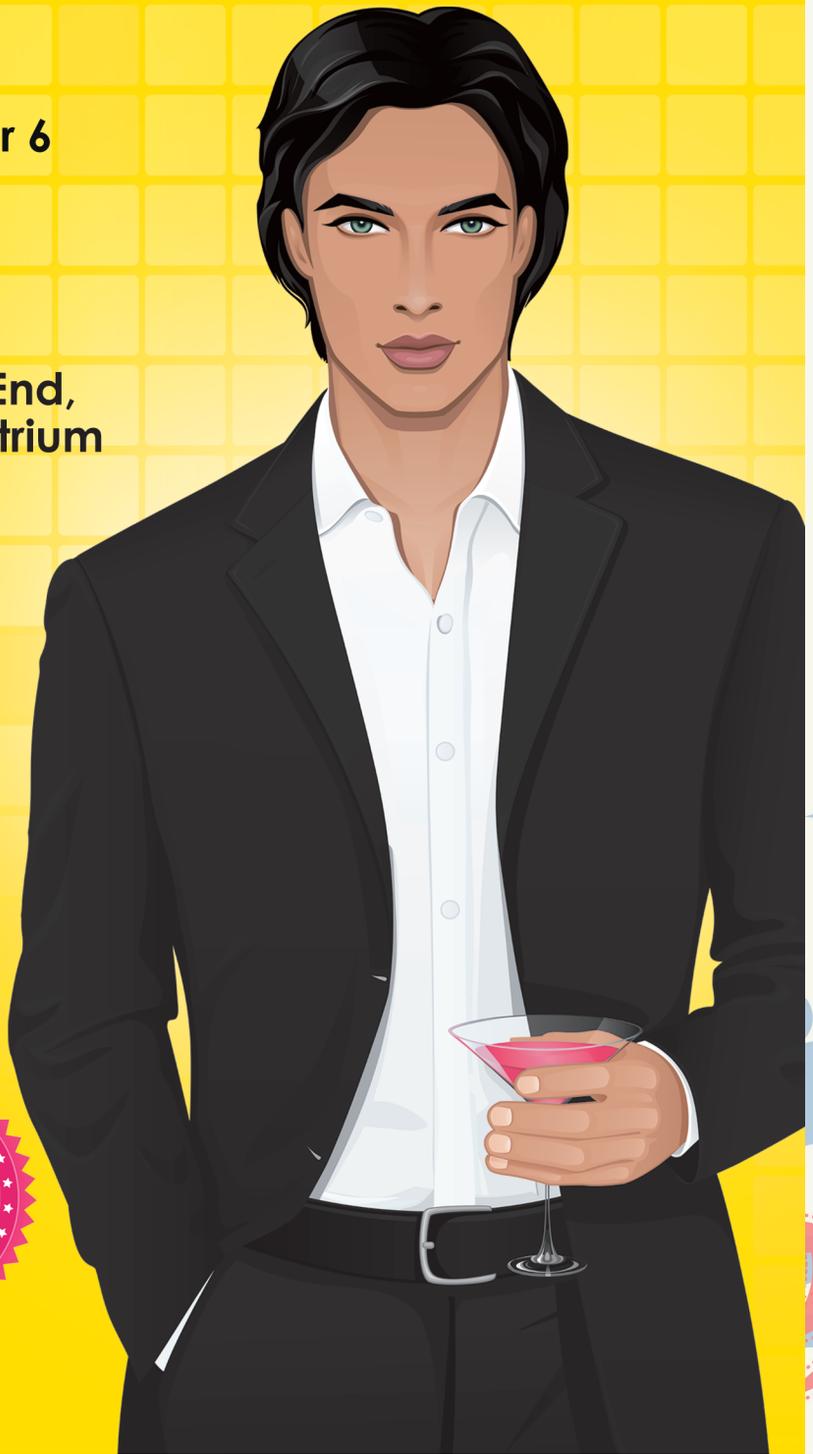
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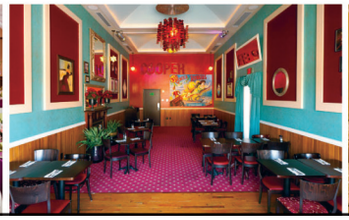


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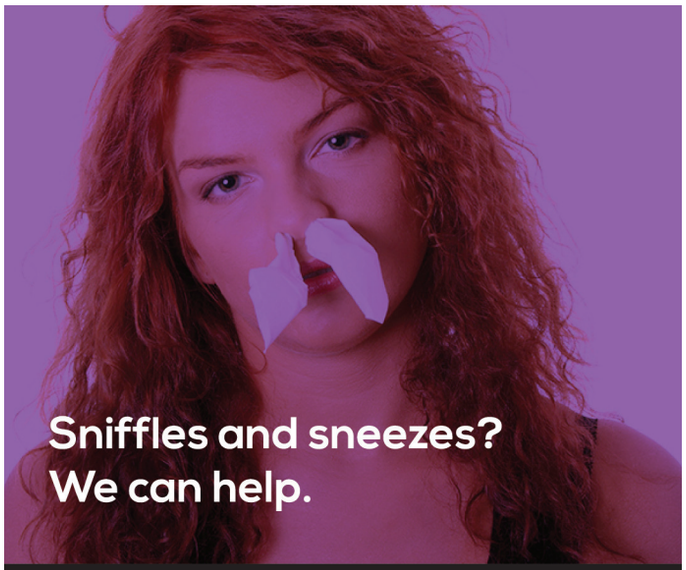
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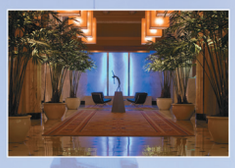


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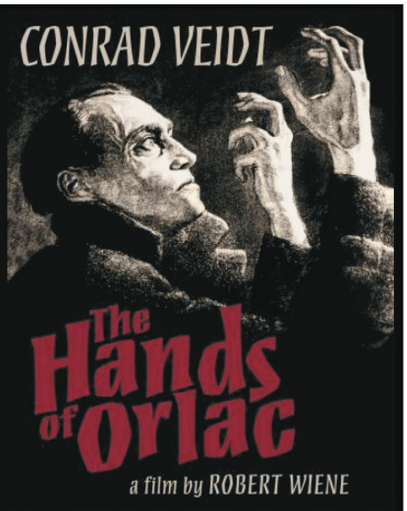

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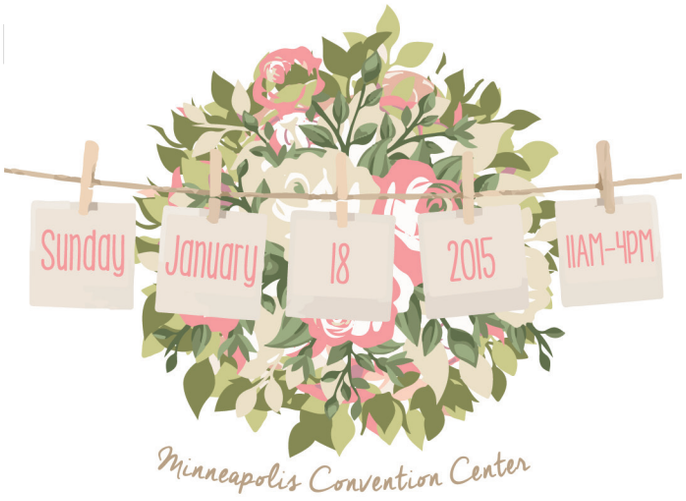
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Bill & Chris at Everwood Farmstead. Photo by Joe Dickie, Generation Photography



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FROM THE EDITOR

by Andy Lien

To Have & To Hold

I wait until the last minute to look at the whole Wedding Issue to determine its theme. We've had "Rewriting History," "Celebrating Us," and "At Last" recently, this one is "To Have & To Hold." When the traditional wedding vows were written to include how two people would have and hold each other until death do them part, it's becoming more and more clear how important this dual-purpose statement is to the same-sex couples getting married today. Not only do the couples get to have each other, the legal marital status, the weddings, the recognition; but the couples also get to hang on to each other forever, through changes in immigration and death and inheritance. We have and we hold.

Nowhere is this more obvious than when talking about family and children. When I contacted Ben Meents about featuring his family in this wedding issue, I asked if he'd care to write the piece. He responded that he would, but wondered what angle would be appropriate. Good question; there is no bad answer. Since starting these comprehensive wedding issues three years ago, we've been political, we've been religious, we've been fashion-focused, we've been detail-oriented. The angles have been as diverse as the couples represented in our pages. Every couple is different. Each wedding is unique.

So, I told him that we need a bit more emotion. Connection. This magazine comes from a state that has had marriage equality for over a year now, but this magazine is accessible from anywhere around the globe. As such, we still observe *Lavender*'s role in the greater discussion about marriage equality and we provide more evidence of how same-sex marriage builds a better society: union by union, family by family. I told Ben that the family he's built with Chet would be a wonderful example for the world.

No pressure.

What happened next could not have surprised or delighted me more.

Ben's 13-year-old daughter, Emma, wrote their wedding story. And I dare you to keep a dry eye as you read it. She talks about the wedding itself, the family and friends who attended it, the family that Ben and Chet have with her, Sophia, and Dominic. She tells us what it is like to have what they do...and how they will hold it forever.

Think of the world ahead for Emma, Sophia, and Dominic. Their future as siblings in this family may never involve any such changes as those we've seen in the past years. Dominic may never know of a time when this family, being comprised of two dads and three kids from different unions, might not have been legally recognized. By telling their own story, they can help kids in other states achieve what Minnesota has, sooner than later.

We hope.

To have, to hold...with hope and thanks,

Andy














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A WORD IN EDGEWISE

by E.B. Boatner

June In October – Listen To The Wedding Bells

When I typed into Google, "How many states have…", the first choice was; "…have gay marriage." It showed thirty states and the District of Columbia now allowing same-sex marriage as of press time, and barriers are being breached at a breath-taking rate.

In 1967, *Loving v. Virginia* finally broke the racial barrier, permitting adults of whatever origin or color to marry legally in the United States. Alabama, in 2000, was the last state to remove such laws from its books, and bans same-sex marriage today.

But it's been legal here in Minnesota since 2013, when the first licenses were issued on August first. While I found that thrilling, and am delighted for all the young couples that can now enjoy this right and privilege, I'm moved equally by the number of couples, together for years, that are finally able to wed.

I attended the wedding of two friends and their kids last fall, one of whom wrote recently words to the effect of, "Our first anniversary–feels more like twenty-five years!" And it was, indeed. Their love, intention, and commitment had made a marriage of a quarter century. Another couple was married last February 14, the anniversary of their actual joining together. Thirty-three years together and counting.

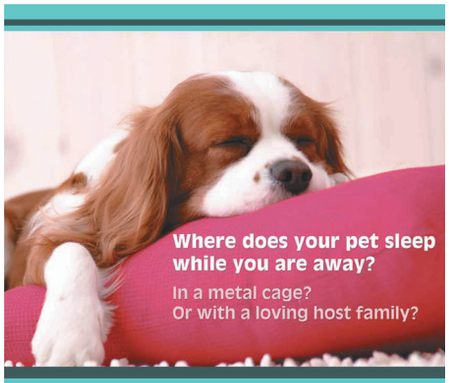
Of course, neither of them have yet equaled the track record of 90-year-old Alice "Nonie" Dubes and 91-year-old Vivian Doyack who, after 72 years together were married in Davenport, Iowa, this September. As the local newspaper reported, "Vivian wore pink, Nonie wore taupe, and the two held hands in their wheelchairs during the ceremony."

Then there's Paul Huff, 73, and Tom Woijtowick, 66, of Lewiston, Montana, who married recently after a committed 30-year relationship. Once married, Catholic officials announced they would have to sign a statement supporting the concept of marriage as a union of a man and a woman and pledge to get a divorce and cease living together, or leave the church.

While Huff and Wojtowick are an example of long-standing love and commitment, they also reflect the kind of thinking—still prevalent—embodied in the case of Alabama and its outdated miscegenation laws.

So while we wish great happiness to all those entering marriage today, let's not forget that there is still a long road ahead for equality for all. ■





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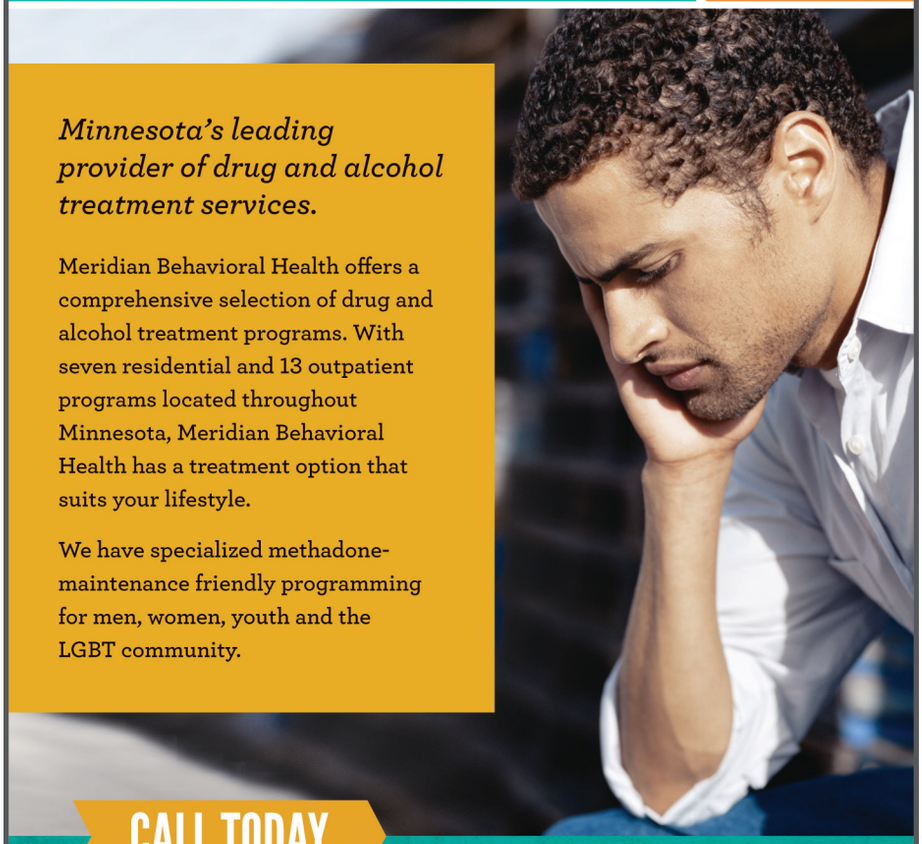


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LEGAL

by Laura Danielson



SAME-SEX COUPLES FINALLY GAIN IMMIGRATION BENEFITS AFTER REPEAL OF DOMA



In my more than 25 years of practicing immigration law, I have seen many loving bi-national couples (one a U.S. citizen and the other a citizen anywhere else) who have sought out legal counsel to remain together in the United States. For opposite-sex couples, the solution has usually been pretty simple. Our immigration system favors marital relationships with a U.S. citizen. Yes, there can be tricky timing and travel considerations, but for the most part the process simply requires filing joint paperwork and waiting for the arduous bureaucracy to churn through

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

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Until the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), same-sex bi-national couples were excluded from immigrating, even if they were legally married abroad or in a state that recognized same-sex marriage.

its various steps, ending with an in-person interview.

Until the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), same-sex bi-national couples were excluded from immigrating, even if they were legally married abroad or in a state that recognized same-sex marriage. I've met with many couples who wanted to live together in the United States, but couldn't because DOMA prohibited it. Often, couples cobbled together solutions, such as extending scholastic programs far longer than normal or applying for annually renewable artist or work visas (for those talented enough to qualify and with employers willing to sponsor them).

Where there were no immigration options either to live abroad together or to get visa extensions in the United States, couples made the difficult decision for the foreign spouse to live in the underground hell of an undocumented person, unable to get work permission or even driver's licenses. Many were caught and deported, tragically bringing their relationship to an end or requiring expensive travel, and the contortions of a long-distance romance.

Angela and Yonara Nucci are a same-sex couple living in Chaska, Minnesota, who fell in love many years ago when Yonara, a foreign student, joined Angela's rock band in Florida. In order for Yonara, who is from Brazil, to remain in the United States and live with Angela, she had to maintain full-time student status under her student visa, which gave her very limited, temporary work options.

Yonara maintained student status for more than seven years, moving from one academic program to the next in order to legally remain with Angela. Ultimately they moved to Minnesota, so that Angela could pursue her career in criminal justice, and Yonara could attend an inexpensive graduate school program. Yonara's continuous schooling, without being eligible for lawful gainful employment, placed an enormous financial burden on this young couple. Although they were married in Massachusetts before DOMA fell, they still could not file for immigration benefits.

Finally, on June 25, 2013, after a lot of hard work from advocates, including those from The DOMA Project who pointed out the many cases of unjust deportations of U.S. citizens' spouses, DOMA was repealed. Same-sex couples could finally avail themselves of all the rights available to heterosexual couples, including the right to apply for immigration benefits.

According to the U.S. Immigration website (www.us-immigration.com), NBC News says that nationally there are approximately 28,000 same-sex couples where one partner has U.S. citizenship and the other does not, who are now able to obtain immigration benefits. The American citizens in these couples are now able to petition for permanent residence for their partners.

With the demise of DOMA, Angela and Yonara were delighted to be able to seek legal counsel and go about the immigration process just like any other bi-national married couple in the United States. The procedure involves the U.S. citizen spouse filing an application establishing that the marriage is real, and the foreign spouse filing an application proving that she is qualified to become a U.S. lawful permanent resident (meaning that she has a clean criminal and immigration record). The couple also has to show that they are self-supporting, and that the foreign spouse (Yonara) is unlikely to ever become a public charge.

Within four months of my initial meeting with the Nuccis, on a freezing cold December morning in 2013, they were interviewed and approved by the local immigration office. The couple was asked routine, standard questions about when and where they met and about their families. Yonara and Angela are lucky to have supportive families, and were able to show photos and explain a history together that dates back many years. In short order, it was clear to me that they would be approved.

It was an exciting day for us all, and the immigration officer even admitted that it was the first case of its kind for her as well. Aside from making history, the approval was a huge relief to Angela and Yonara. As the new holder of a green card, Yonara could now get a full-time job, quit being a perennial student, and travel abroad to visit family without worrying about being unable to return to the United States. (Because student visas require only "temporary intent" to reside in the United States, many students avoid travel, and end up spending years away from their families.) In addition to everything else, Yonara finally could share the financial burdens of their household with Angela.

Immigration benefits are now available for all same-sex married couples across the country, even in states where same-sex marriage is not recognized. After a quarter of a century representing couples at their marriage interviews, I was thrilled to participate in such a historic moment. As momentous as it was, the process itself was gloriously routine!

I told Yonara and Angela afterwards that with their long-term committed relationship and spotless immigration record, they were poster children for what was undoubtedly an important and educational experience for our local immigration office (not to mention me). I drove away from their interview feeling grateful that I have practiced law long enough to see this moment, this "new normal" that our younger lawyers and immigration officers will take for granted in the future.

No longer will I have to work legal contortions to ensure that two people who have committed to a life together can remain living side by side. As I drove I remembered a time decades ago when I was with a group of immigration lawyers sitting around with some immigration officers in the very same building where Yonara and Angela were interviewed. Someone joked about the preposterous idea of having to interview same-sex couples one day. One officer said, "That's going to happen when hell freezes over!" Well, I thought, it only seemed fitting that the temperature had dipped below zero on that cold December morning, because hell had indeed frozen over. ■

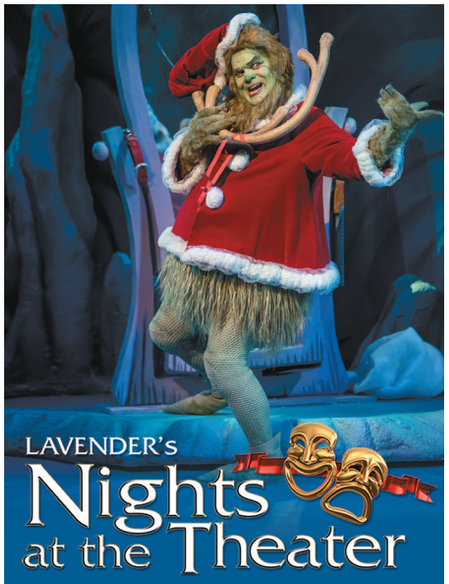
Laura Danielson is the chair of the Immigration Group at Fredrikson & Byron in Minneapolis. Laura works with individuals, companies, investors, and other professionals in non-immigrant and immigrant visa matters with special concentration on arts, business, and investor-based immigration. She also has expertise in I-9 audits, employer sanctions, family immigration, asylum and naturalization matters. She can be reached at ldanielson@fredlaw.com.



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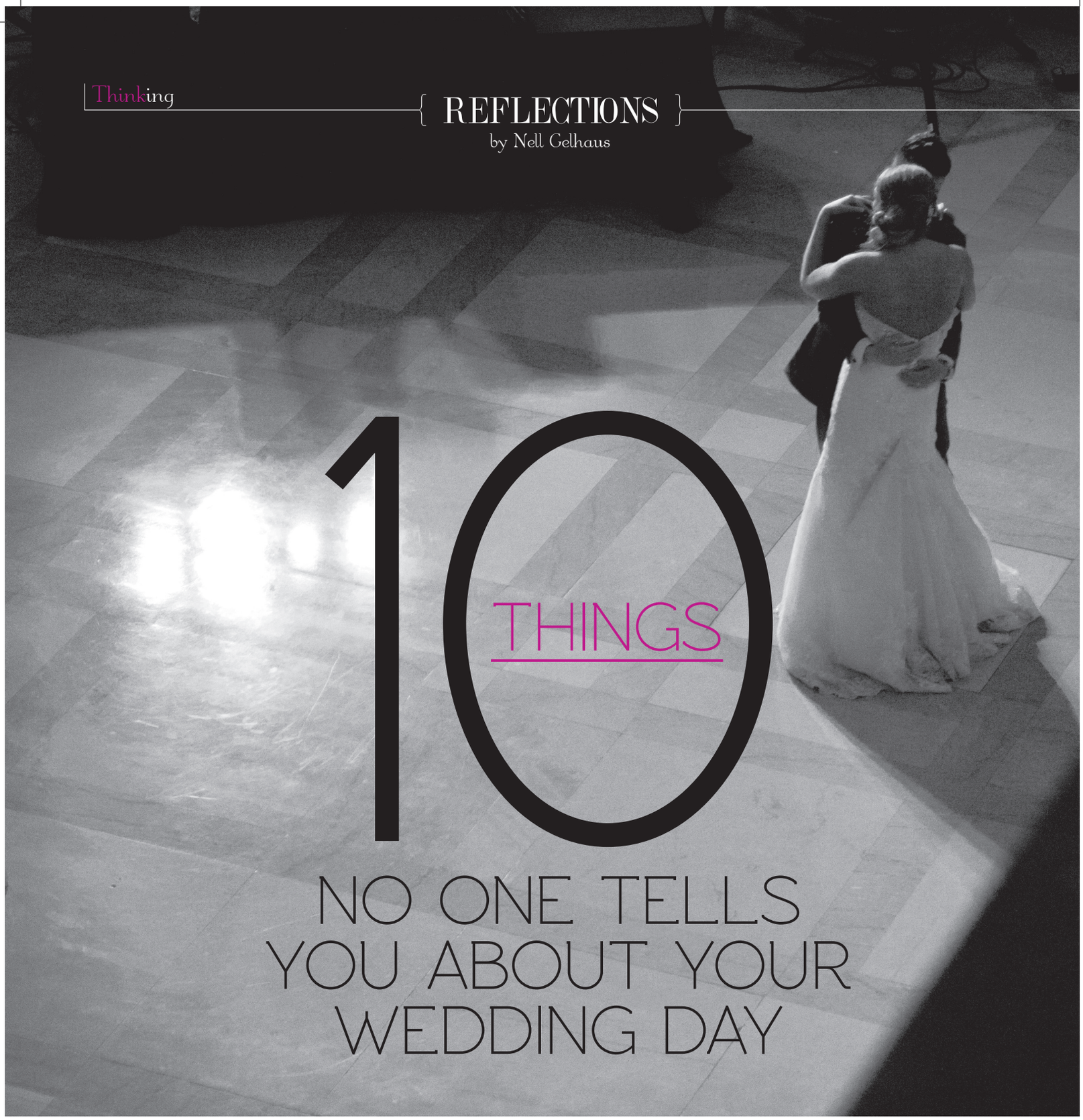
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REFLECTIONS

by Nell Gelhaus



10 THINGS NO ONE TELLS YOU ABOUT YOUR WEDDING DAY

Photo by Samantha Fronek Photography

In the weeks and days leading up to our wedding, well-meaning family and friends took every opportunity to dole out advice on everything we should expect on the Big Day.

"Save extra money for random day-of expenses!"

"Everything that can go wrong, will, and you'll love it anyway!"

"Delegate someone to speak to the caterer/bartenders/DJ so they aren't bugging you during the reception!"

"It goes by in a blur! Make sure you live in the moment!"

We took their words to heart and heeded their counsel as best we could. Everything they said was true, and yes, even though things were forgotten or didn't go as planned, my bride and I mutually agreed the day was still truly the best of our lives thus far. There were, however, certain things that *no one* told us. And though our wedding was perfect for us as it was, perhaps sharing these tidbits ahead of time will make someone else's wedding perfect for them. So here you have them:

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



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1. Your wedding party will seize any and every opportunity to drown your nerves in alcohol.

Beginning the moment you wake. Though I attempted to pace myself throughout the day, the hour prior to the wedding all bets were off. One by one, the "Nellsmen" stole me away to the bar across the street from our venue and bought a round. Then the bartender recognized the occasion and bought me a shot. Back at the venue, someone pulled out a hidden beer. Suffice it to say, I was definitely buzzed on life and love and lemon drops.

2. You won't have to lift a finger.

Control freak? Better get over it. Being the type of person that usually survives social functions by busying myself with prep, I was left to watch helplessly as the venue was decorated around me. Every attempt to assist was met with an "Oh let me get that!" or a "You just relax!" and a "Why don't you sit down for awhile?" Which left me with nothing to do but sit anxiously and hope the booze did its job.

3. Your parents kick it into high gear.

I watched my usually quiet and reserved mother work the greeting line like a seasoned pro as guests arrived, and my eyes widened in amazement. All sets of parents cheerfully met and welcomed every guest in our post-ceremony receiving line, and it hit me then that all the people we held most dear to us were meeting each other for the first time. It wasn't lost on me how lucky we were (and are) to have the support we do, and to be able to say with pride, "These are my parents."

4. People will constantly be staring at you.

I became keenly aware of the number of eyes on me the moment I ushered our folks down the aisle. And then ever more aware of an unseen spotlight pointed directly at me as the wedding party began their march, and I stood waiting, more nervous than I've ever been in my life. Eyes, eyes, everywhere. Some beaming, some crying, all fixed right on me. I silently thanked my wedding party for those shots and attempted to stop fidgeting. No fading into the background or hiding in the corner on your wedding day, my fellow introverts.

5. The ceremony is the best part.

Seriously. It's surreal, almost. Perhaps because that moment, the one that I'd dreamed of for so long seemed so very out of reach and unattainable for the longest time, and with marriage just recently being legalized in our beloved state; the actual moment of saying our vows was otherworldly. Your bride will outdo herself, looking more stunning than you knew was humanly possible. And you will make promises and feel an outpouring of love from all those you love the most. The ceremony is a treasure.

6. At some point, someone will hand you a microphone.

The Day After, my bride said to me, "How could you *not* know you would have to say something?" Apparently, I'm the only one in the world that didn't realize I would have to address a captive audience toward the end of dinner. I barely made it out of my speech alive. Words flowing smoothly from my fingertips into a Word document does not make for words flowing smoothly from my mouth. Mortifyingly, mid-speech, I pointed out the elephant in the room, thanking our parents for stepping up and supporting their gay children, and then could *not seem to stop talking*. My mind blanks when I try to recall what I actually said, but at some point the microphone was mercifully removed from my hand.

7. You won't see your spouse all night.

Well, you might see her, but she'll be on the other side of the room. And as you make your way over to her, you'll be stopped and hugged for the thousandth time, and by the time you reach her, she'll be back where you started. And repeat.

8. There will be sex, and you won't be having it.

Of course you won't—you're exhausted! Instead, a couple guests sneak off to, ahem, do "some reading" in the third floor restricted section of your National Historic Landmark library venue, and get caught by the ancient security guard with a flashlight. You become aware of this when said security guard threatens to kick them out and call off the reception. Thankfully he has a change of heart, and your guests, red-faced, can return to the dance floor.

9. You'll talk to everyone, but feel like you didn't talk to anyone.

All your favorite people in one place! It's impossible to have all the conversations you want, especially with those friends and family that have traveled far to attend, or the professors and mentors you rarely see. You make a mental note to plan visits.

10. You will be starving.

After four straight months on a diet, who wouldn't be starving? And that's only part of the problem. The food you spent all your money on? Hope you don't expect to actually eat any of it. Because between every bite, there's a speech, or guests singing songs with the word "LOVE," and *how can you eat anything with everyone staring at you*? Arriving back to our hotel room after a glorious evening, there was only one thing on our minds as a newlywed couple alone in our bridal suite. *Pizza*. Commence a fight over who would go to the lobby to pick it up; apparently it wasn't being delivered to our room. "You're going to make me put back on that dress?!" screeched my newly beloved. I'd fallen asleep by the time she returned but woke up as she angrily turned off the lights and crawled into bed, still arguing. I noisily chomped away in a corner in the dark, barely able to keep my eyes open, muttering, "THIS is a great way to start a marriage!"

In truth, the day *was* a great way to start a marriage. After months of planning (years for my bride, I'm sure) there wasn't a single thing I'd change, save for perhaps pre-planning for that post-wedding famine. The only bit of advice I'll share, my betrothed friends, if you forget all else: Don't make her put back on the dress. ■





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{ WEDDING STORY }

by Emma Meents - Photos by Jay Kelly Images: www.jaykellyimages.com





A WEDDING STORY: BEN MEENTS & CHET RITCHIE

It is a beautiful evening in June, and I am standing in the back of a crowded room at The Bachelor Farmer next to my dad, Ben. I am holding his hand really tight. It feels kind of sweaty. My little sister Sophia is next to us, too. She is holding his other hand. This moment feels like the right place to start my story, with sweaty hands and all. You see, we are at a wedding. But it is not your typical wedding. This is *our* wedding. Sophia and I are about to walk my dad down the aisle to meet Chet and his son Dominic, and I want to start my story here because we are about to become a family…officially.

Before we get to the sappy part, I should stop here to tell you some important details first. Like what I am wearing. This is a wedding, after all. I am wearing a white dress. It's very simple but elegant, with just a little bit of detailed silver beading on it. My shoes are sparkly silver with a little heel. My dad approves of my outfit. He says it is very "age appropriate." I am almost 13, so this comment normally annoys me, but tonight I don't care because I actually feel so pretty and everyone has been saying such nice things to me. My sister is nine and she is wearing the cutest light, flowing, soft-pink dress. Dominic is five and looking like a doll in a seersucker suit. Everyone is calling them "beautiful," "handsome," and "smart-looking," and tonight I agree.

Oh, and my dad and Chet are wearing tuxes—midnight blue with black lapels. They look very handsome, of course. There are white and gold paper lanterns all over. Candles fill the room with light. There are white and gold painted tree branches that seem to be floating in the air. The flowers filling the room are all white and lush. Our friend Larry arranged them all and my sister and I even got to help him pick some of them out. He made my sister and I each our own little bouquet. Everything in my view right now looks and feels magical.

So, to be honest these are the things I am thinking about standing here in the back of the room when I look up at my dad as we are waiting. I guess that's what I am supposed to think about at a wedding, right? How beautiful everyone looks and how special it feels to be here right now.

For a long time before we got to this moment I have heard people talk about "gay weddings." But if you ask me, this looks and feels just like any wedding where people come to celebrate love and the commitment of two people. Everyone in this room looks filled with happiness and love. They came here to celebrate my new family and my dad and Chet's love for each other. I don't know if I expected it to feel any different as a "gay wedding," but at this moment it just feels like the best wedding in the world.

My friend Tess' dad is talking in the front of the room now, doing a reading. It is hard to focus. I am a mix of nervous and excited. I hear him say something about when you find your soul mate you can be loved and accepted for who you truly are. I understand what this means. I feel really proud of my dad and Chet and everything they have been through.

Great, I feel like I am starting to cry already and I have to get my dad to the front of the room. The music starts and everyone in the room turn their heads all at once. It looks like a wave.

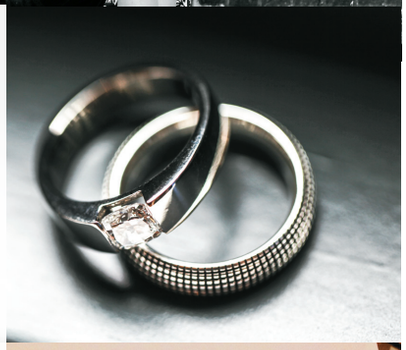
We are walking now and music fills the room. I see a lot of smiles and some tears. Oh my gosh, is this actually happening? My heart feels warm as I walk by everyone in my dad's family. My grandma and grandpa smile at me. I see my Aunt Gretchen and Uncle Joey and give them a little wave. I walk by friends that have been a part of our lives since my dad and Chet met. Some of dad and Chet's friends have kids here tonight that have become some of our best friends. It feels like the room is filled with one big family.

As I look at all the faces in the room, I start thinking about Chet's parents and others who have chosen to not come to our wedding. I know there are a lot of people in the world still who think it is wrong to be gay. We are here to celebrate love and family, and I feel bad for those who don't get to experience this moment with us. I wish they would want to see Chet and my dad

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30







make a commitment to each other. I feel sad because they are missing this important moment in their son's life. I wish they could find it in their hearts to meet me and my sister. They are still my new family even if I never get to meet them. They are a part of Chet so I still will love them either way, because I love Chet.

I am at the front of the room now with my dad and sister. Chet and Dominic walk up the aisle on the other side to meet us here. We are all finally standing in front of everyone. There are so many people in the world who have waited so long for a moment like this. I almost can't believe this is happening.

Stacy is officiating. She is one of Chet's best friends. Dom calls her "Auntie Stacy." She looks so pretty. She is standing between my dad and Chet talking about love.

Maybe this is a strange feeling to have at a wedding, but suddenly I think to myself, wow they are brave to stand up here. They seem excited, emotional and nervous. I am, too. I don't want to look at my Auntie Lori and Uncle Mike because I am starting to cry now. Stacy is saying something but I am thinking about how long it took for my dad and Chet to find each other and all of the things each of them have been through in their lives to get here.

I think everyone at this moment must be able to feel how very important they are to each other. Chet says his vows. He promises to be my dad's "navigator, best friend, and husband. To honor, to love, and to cherish" him through all of life's adventures.

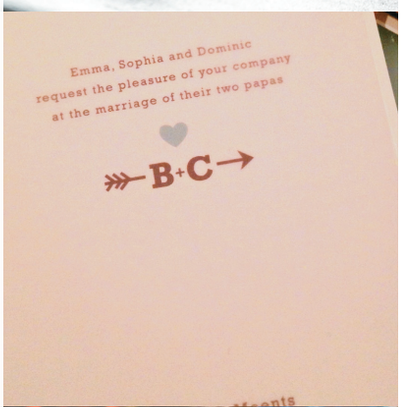
My mind wanders. I think about how lucky I am that Chet came into my dad's life. Most couples go on dates to fancy dinners when they start dating. Not my dad and Chet. They took us to the Water Park of America. I think we will have a lot of adventures like that ahead of us. That is the day Sophia and I met Dom for the first time. It's funny how much life changes in those moments.

Now my dad looks at Chet. "I promise to believe in you, to honor our commitment to each other, and make our family my priority always." Wow. How many kids get to experience a feeling like this? I am crying. A little embarrassed, I cry anyway because I am so happy.

Maybe there isn't a dry eye in the room. I have known for a long time that my dad and Chet loved each other, but it suddenly feels different.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 ➡















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WEDDING STORY

We are standing in front of our closest friends and family, and my dad and Chet are looking into each other's eyes making this commitment. But it is not only to each other, it is to me and Sophia and Dominic, too. Their vows confirm their commitment to our family.

I wish the whole world could see how beautiful it is for these two people who are committed to each other to be recognized legally. Some people may still disagree, but I am grateful because my dads' marriage gives our family a kind of security that they will always be there for each other, and for us, no matter what. Whatever anyone else choses to accept or believe, I know in my heart we have as much love as any other family, and that now no one can take that away from us.

My dad always tells me we are each born unique and that we are happiest in life when we can celebrate however it is that we were made. This moment is a celebration of who my two dads are. It is a celebration of love. It is a celebration of our family. And at this moment the world feels like a better place because of it. ■

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{ WEDDING STORY }

by Shana Gee-Cohen - Photos by Emma Freeman Photography - www.emmafreemanphotography.com





OUR BIG GAY JEWISH WEDDING: SHANA & BECK GEE-COHEN

The night I met Beck, I was spinning records at a house party in Northeast. Beck and her friend decided to stop by on their way to another party. I instantly noticed Beck walk in. Beck is totally my type: the androgynous/edgy/ but-not-too-edgy-with-tattoos type. After I put on the next song, I walked over and introduced myself. Beck asked me if I was the DJ, and I replied "Yeah, I also DJ 'lesbian' parties." (This was my way of dropping an obvious clue that I am into girls.) Beck replied, "That's cool. I am also a DJ," but I found out later that she was really thinking about how hot I am! I know it's cheesy, but it really felt like love at first sight. The universe had lined us up that night for a reason. From that night on, Beck and I have been together. Beck proposed to me about a year-and-a-half later, and our big gay Jewish wedding was on June 1, 2014.

I am a professional event planner; so planning my own wedding was like my dream come true. I love my career and the opportunity to be creative on a daily basis. I got into event planning after finishing my master's degree in social work. I thought I was going to be a case manager, but found an amazing job planning fundraising events instead.

I started planning a year out. I first secured the venue, the caterer, the photographer, and asked my business partner, Tawnya " Sweetpea" Konobeck to help me plan. The next step was asking our friends and family to be part of the wedding and assigning them tasks. Designing the look of the wedding was simple. I decided to rent colorful linens to give the reception a beautiful coral "pop" with charcoal and mint accents. I handmade the centerpieces from thrift store vinyl and spray painted Bundt pans. Throw in some succulents, paper lanterns, and some

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36







glitter—and voila! Perfection.

Beck and I both agree that the most memorable part of the event was dancing the hora. In the Jewish tradition, everyone at the party danced in a circle and the couple gets lifted in chairs. Beck and I were hoisted up into the air and circled by a community that supported us. The feeling of actually being lifted by the people that love us the most made our commitment to each other elevate to a new level.

The best advice I would give any couple is to plan ahead. I was able to save hundreds of dollars by ordering my invitations and decorations on Black Friday, and at thrift stores. Another piece of advice is to not be afraid to negotiate with vendors for what you want. Most vendors are willing to drop the price a little, just by asking. Finally, HIRE AN EVENT PLANNER! It's the best money you can spend, to not have to worry the day of your wedding.

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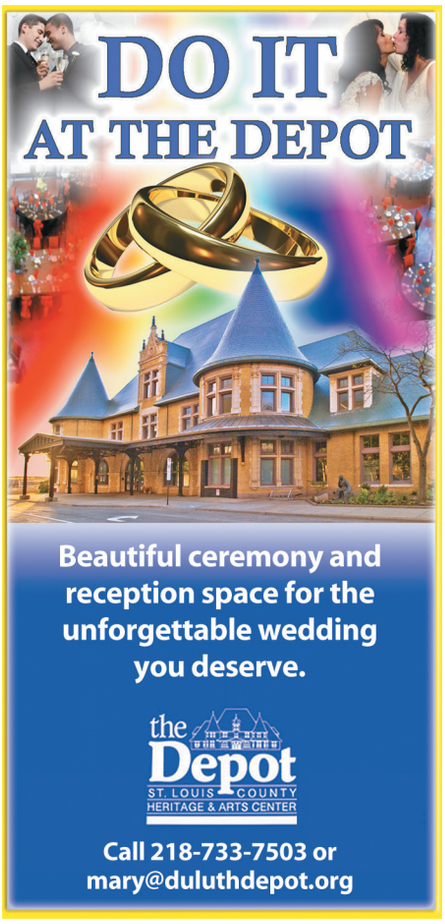








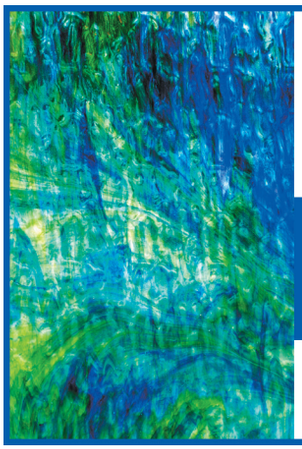




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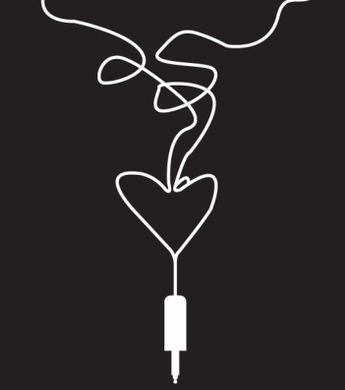


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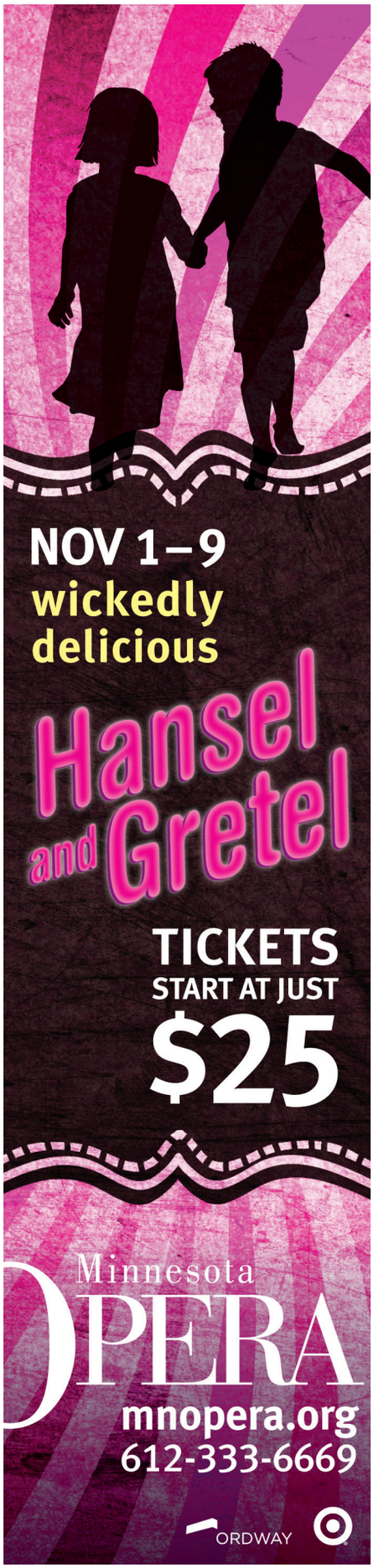
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CONTINUED ON PAGE 44



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When Bill Underwood and Chris Everett pulled into the driveway at Everwood, the place spoke to them immediately, although they weren't looking for a farm. "While seeking a place for a retreat, we were attracted to properties with land and space rather than water," Bill says. "We didn't know if we were going to build something new or renovate something old."

The two purchased the property in October 2010 and began upgrading the space while still maintaining its 100-year-old charm. The addition of a gender-neutral outhouse in 2011 was quickly followed by a collaboration with the DNR to do a prairie restoration on 10 acres. Everwood is also home to bees and 15 chickens with full-time caretakers residing on the property.

Everwood hasn't been a working dairy farm since the 1980s and it seemed destined to follow the same path as other old, unused spaces with roofs beginning to compromise. The first winter after purchasing the place, Bill and Chris started by restoring the main house: the weather was a perfect opportunity to focus on the inside spaces.

"We did, however, learn that one can put a new roof on a barn even when there's snow on the ground," Bill says. So they started early, securing it by putting on a new metal roof to guard from the weather. (A top priority!) That spring, the two men shifted their full attention to the barn and the grounds. Structurally, the barn was quite sound, having learned it was built with California redwood, which Bill says is probably why it's still in such good shape.

"We then began to shovel out the result of 30 years of pigeon residency along with general structural repair and the addition of sliding doors and windows on the west and east sides to maximize the views and breezes," he says. "The weekend after it was finished, we hosted a small wedding for one of our closest friends and we began to see the potential of this beautiful, church-like space."

Initially, the men were simply motivated to restore the property, knowing it would be a beautiful space for something. After the first wedding, they were inspired to think big. "Guests were moved by the space and the land as much as we were," Bill says. "Dinner in the barn felt elegant. We were able to acquire a free grand piano our first year and happily discovered the acoustics in the barn are incredible!"

Since then, Everwood has hosted a handful of intimate celebrations, which Bill describes as having been moving and beautiful. The building and the property set a beautiful stage for the gatherings. After the second year, conversation turned to the concept of Bill and Chris' legacy as a couple and the early seeds of the Everwood Farmstead Foundation were planted.

"While we are excited to rent the space for intimate events of 100 guests or less, our main focus is providing a space for artists to perform and/or work while building community," Bill says. Through the Everwood Farmstead Foundation, professional artists have an opportunity to work, perform, imagine, and teach, all while communing with the natural surroundings.

"We are excited to present a wide variety of disciplines from music to dance to storytelling. This provides a venue for a rural area that is hungry for artistic experiences, a diverse opportunity for artists, and builds a unique community in the audience." All tickets are donation-based, half the proceeds going to the artists, the other half going to local school programs. Since its inception, the Artist Series has contributed almost $6,000 to Wisconsin school programs. In the future, Bill and Chris hope to finish renovation on the original farmhouse by 2016 and start receiving applications for artists-in-residence.

Philanthropy aside, the Farmstead operates as a beautiful venue for various events, weddings included. Similar to most venues, Everwood comes with a preferred list of trusted and talented vendors familiar with the venue, including River Valley Catering, located in River Falls, Wisconsin.

"They have done several events at the farm, including our own wedding, and they've always done an extraordinary job," Bill says. "The food is consistently delicious and memorable. We even asked if we could grow and deliver all the carrots and potatoes for our wedding dinner and the chef happily obliged."

If the surrounding nature isn't enough to love the space, Everwood has taken special care to light the interior of the barn in an artful way. The central feature is a custom-made, two-tier, iron chandelier made of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

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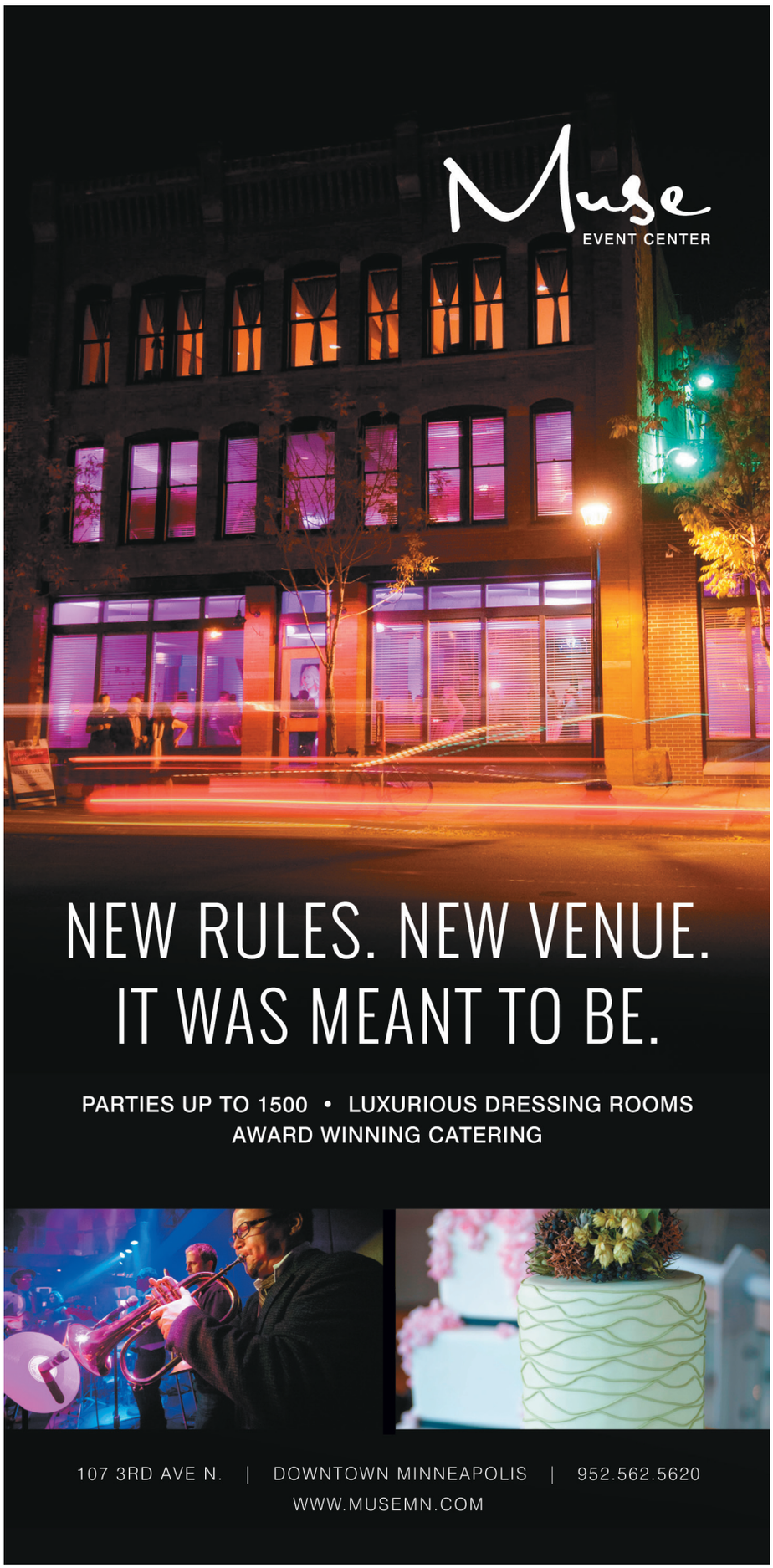
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Everwood has hosted a handful of intimate celebrations, which Bill describes as having been moving and beautiful.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 48



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two antique wagon wheels (a gift Bill and Chris gave to each other for their own wedding). The height of the chandelier can be adjusted and the ceiling is lit with ambient light—all are on dimmers. The sides of the barn are hung with string lights, and couples even have the option of moveable can lights to illuminate a stage area. Finally, there are several homey lamps for buffet tables, the piano, and the bar.

But wait—there's more! The exterior of the barn, the outhouse, and several of the outbuildings have their own lights. The grove of trees by the parking area is filled with string lights as well. There is also a moveable spotlight and tiki torches to illuminate the parking area on especially dark nights, and even three moveable fire pits for light and warmth.

Clearly, the barn has been thoughtfully and minimally decorated to highlight its natural features. The barn entrance has 25-foot tall burlap curtains to frame the opening and the chandelier. There are 200 vintage wooden chairs, numerous tables, and a piano to arrange as needed, leaving little room (and no need) for further embellishment at any event.

Bill suggests four unique selling points to Everwood Farmstead for smaller gatherings (100 or less): it is rare to find a 100-year old structure in such beautiful condition; located in the Driftless area of Wisconsin means the farmstead is in the middle of beautiful rolling hills; trails all through the property allow guests to easily wander and enjoy the outdoors; and Everwood is only 70 miles from the Twin Cities in Glenwood City, Wisconsin.

Because of these unique qualities, Bill and Chris chose Everwood as the venue for their own wedding. (Bill says, "It's the place we love most.") But why would a couple living (and working corporate jobs) in Minneapolis also run a venue in Wisconsin? During the week, their loft and jobs are located downtown and they walk and bike just about everywhere—home life takes very little time and effort. "We have two very different life experiences in the city and the country," Bill says. "When we go to the country, we love working and wandering on the land. We often come home Sunday nights quite sore from the work but we are always renewed by the place. We love being with the bees and chickens on Sunday and in a corporate meeting on Monday. It provides great balance."

And what of the men behind the venue? They met passing several times in the Minneapolis skyway. Bill eventually asked Chris to lunch and the rest is history, this year being their tenth anniversary together. "Even though we weren't allowed to legally get married, we made our own marriage," Bill says. "Privately, you build a life, a home, a family, recognized by others or not."

Bill proposed Labor Day weekend of 2013 at their favorite overlook at the farm. They had invited some of their closest friends and family for dinner that evening. What Chris didn't know (but the guests did) was that it was an engagement party dinner. Bill arranged so that each couple, who played a significant role in their journey as a couple, were stationed at some point on Everwood's trails and each read a letter Chris had written to Bill over the years as the two walked and found them on the trails. It was very meaningful. After Chris said an enthusiastic "Yes!" they joined everyone back at the barn for a big dinner.

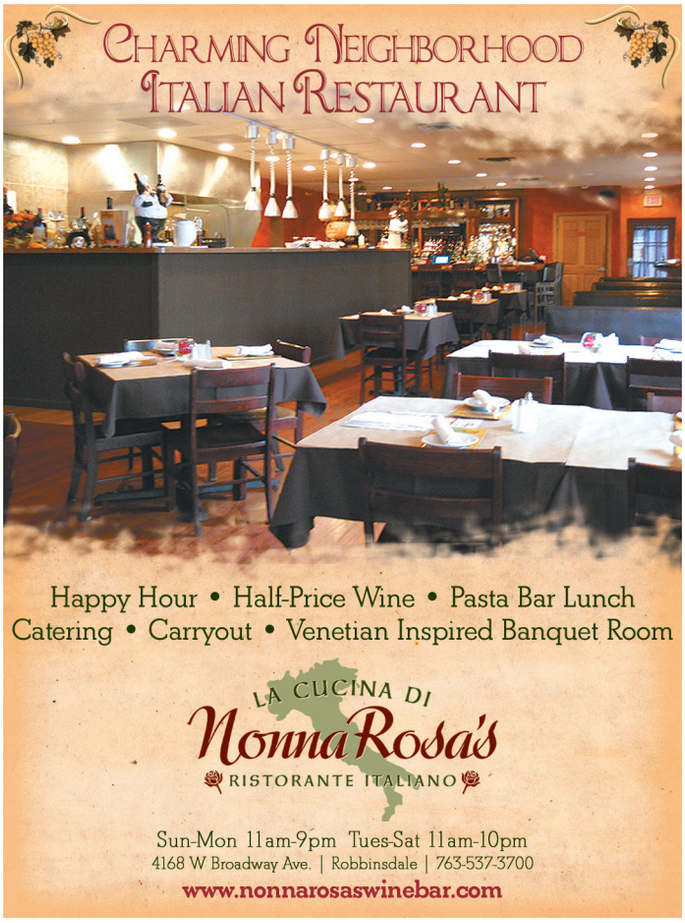
"We had over 200 people at our event and we had a wonderful time," Bill says. "We did notice how hard the tent and traffic was on the property. That's why we're limiting guests to 100 in the barn for rentals. We want to preserve the beauty of the property, which is part of what makes it so special."

Find out more about Everwood Farmstead at www.everwoodfarmstead.com. ■











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JEWELRY

by Shane Lueck - Photos courtesy of Anne Sportun

"RING" THE WEDDING BELLS



Everyone has a childhood memory of playing dress-up; either trying on Dad's ties, which end up hanging down to the floor, or putting on Mom's lipstick and much-too-large heels. For Anne Sportun, the memory is a fascination with her grandmother's costume jewelry, which she kept in elaborate cookie tins. "The jewelry would often get tangled and I would spend hours untangling it for her," Anne says.

A career in jewelry design was on the horizon, as Anne sold her first collection of glass earrings to stores when she was 16. She shares, "As a teenager I taught myself stained glass and along with making lampshades and sun catchers, I made earrings!"



Now an established designer selling her collections at stores like Max's in St. Louis Park, Anne knows her way around a wedding ring. Although she loves to work with 18K yellow gold ("It's like working with butter!"), she advises couples to not follow trends. She says, "I think jewelry is so personal. More important than any trend, it's about finding a style and design, or even an artist with which you connect, to represent your union and love."

Same-sex couples don't even have to have the same ring, or even match at all. Once again, Anne suggests going with what you love. In fact, Anne's clients





will often not have rings that match in design. However, the rings look related as they may have the same texture or finish, since everything Anne makes is by hand. And, should a couple choose the same metal, the unique metal alloy used will connect the rings to each other.

Depending on the purpose of a piece of jewelry, Anne says she typically uses different design elements, although right-hand rings can vary from a classic solitaire to a large rose-cut colored center stone. "A beautiful rose-cut sapphire center stone surrounded by pave diamonds can similarly be worn as an engagement ring!" she says. "Colored gems for fashion rings work well especially when they contain a softer stone than sapphire and are not worn every day. Absolutely diamonds for wedding bands as diamond is the hardest stone there is, and there really is never a day we are without our wedding band."

The greatest advice Anne gives to couples looking for wedding bands is to take your time. Looking and revisiting pieces works best for some people as it allows them time to have the design percolate in their thoughts. "Often people will have a list of their top three, and more often than not will return to the very first ring they liked," she says. "But they need and deserve to take the time and experience the process of purchasing a ring to symbolize such a significant and wonderful life event." ■

Take a look at Anne's collection at www.annesportun.com, or her jewelry is available at Max's:
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KRIS & DARCIE BAUMANN

Wedding Date: November 16, 2013
Dating Since: 2011
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Chanhassen Dinner Theatres
Photographer: Lexi Renae Art, Photography & Designs
Officiant: Kjersti Moline of Grand Avenue Wedding Officiants
Florist: Your Enchanted Florist, St. Paul
Cake: Buttercream Cakes & Desserts
Invitations: Vista Print
DJ & Photobooth: WedPhoria























KATHLEEN & KRISSY BRADBURY

Wedding Date: August 22, 2014
Dating Since: August 2012
Location of Ceremony & Reception: 612 Brew
Photographer: a.m.photography
Wedding Coordinator: Elizabeth Murphy
Florist: Lea Wilcox
Catering: Brasa
Cake: Sweet Retreat Cupcake Boutique











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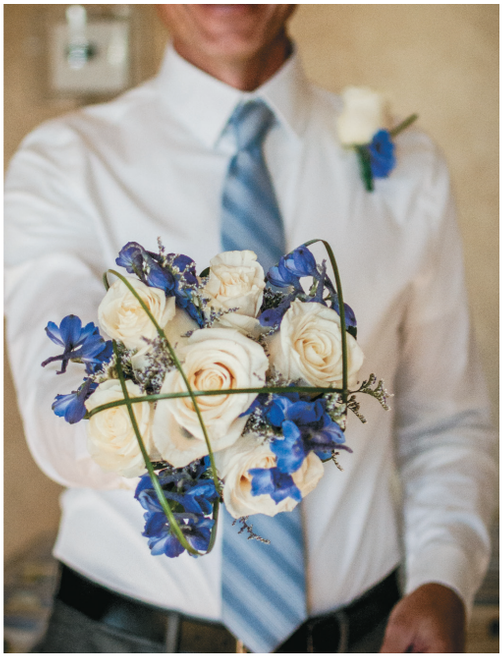




DARRYL CARR & JOHN SCHULTZ

Wedding Date: June 20, 2014
Dating Since: March 2002
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Lakeville Holiday Inn and Suites
Photographer: Angela Aird Photography
Wedding Coordinator: Lula James from Florence, SC
Florist: DIY by the Wedding Party
Cake: Patty's Bakery, New Prague





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MOLLY & LJ ELWOOD

Wedding Date: September 20, 2014
Dating Since: 2012
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Rochester, MN
Photographer: Sarah Blesener Photography
Wedding Coordinator: Christina Welke
Florist: Christina Welke
Cake: Dawn Hodapp at Top Tier Designs
Invitations: Pear Tree Greetings







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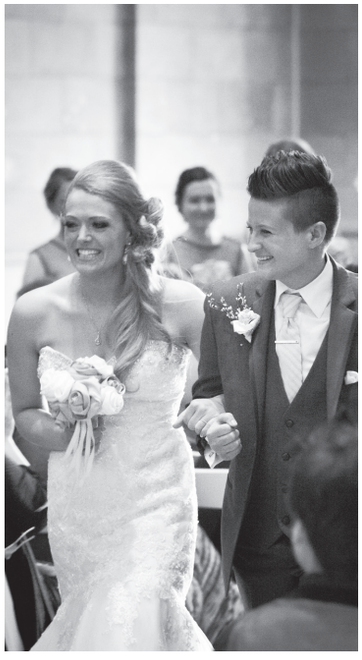
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NELL & KELSEY (HJELMELAND) GELHAUS

Wedding Date: May 10, 2014
Dating Since: September 2011
Location of Ceremony & Reception: James J. Hill Reference Library, St. Paul, MN
Photographer: Samantha Fronek Photography
Wedding Coordinator: Kelsey
Officiant: Nell's Aunt
Florist: Kelsey
Cake: Build Your Own DQ Sundae Bar Courtesy of Dustin Hjelmeland/Dawson Dairy Queen
Invitations: Nell & Kelsey
Music: Nell's Mom (piano) and Kelsey's Mom (singer)








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JOANNA (JOJO) & BOBBI JO GRUNDHOEFER

Wedding Date: October 4, 2013
Dating Since: 2009
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Family Farm in Rural Dennison, MN
Photographer: Sweet Shibui Photography
Attire: White by Vera Wang
Catering: Jeff Svenddal
Cake: Kari Hermanson
Music: JoJo's Brother and Stepdad

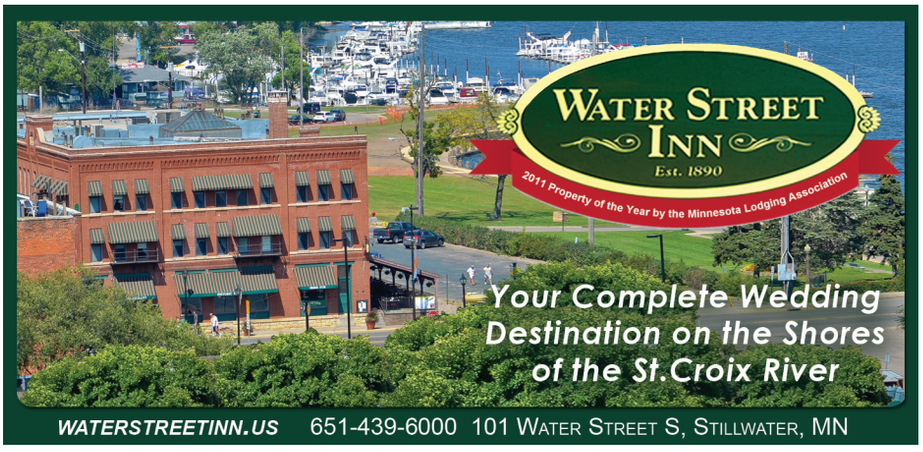












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VANESSA HELMER & ALEX SWEIGERT

Wedding Date: June 7, 2014
Dating Since: 2008
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Riverwood Inn, Otsego, MN
Photographer: Kuba Kraskiewicz, Photographer, Cinematographer, Editor
Florist: Vanessa's Mom
Cake: Cupcakes by Friend, Alyson Bohy
Invitations: DIY by Vanessa with Michael's Invitations













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JENNIFER & SHANNON LONGNION

Wedding Date: April 24, 2014 (official), April 26, 2014 (celebration)
Dating Since: July 1998
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Salt Caves, Skyrock Farm, Medina, MN
Photographer: Angela Aird Photography
Wedding Coordinator: Jennifer & Shannon
Florist: Family
Invitations: Evite





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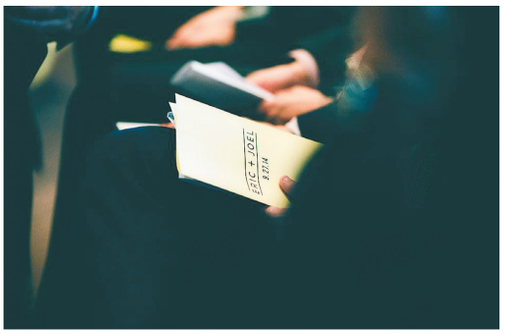


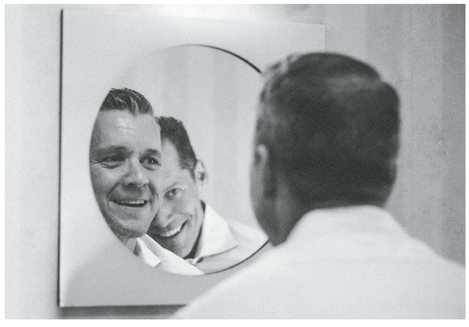
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JOEL HOEKSTRA & ERIC JENSEN

Wedding Date: September 27, 2014
Dating Since: April 1996
Location of Ceremony & Reception: FIVE Event Center, Minneapolis
Photographer: Sean O'Brien
Wedding Coordinator: Eric Jensen
Florist: Larry Pfarr, Leap Retail
Catering & Cake: The Deco Catering
Invitations: Celebrations.com







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NICK & JAMES KUNZ

Wedding Date: May 4, 2014
Dating Since: September 2009
Location of Ceremony: All God's Children Metropolitan Community Church
Location of Reception: Semple Mansion
Photographer: Tom Sandelands
Wedding Coordinator: Katherine Hendrickson, Semple Mansion
Florist: Leo Tassinari
Cake: Angel Food Bakery
Invitations: Jessica Cambeiro from idesignSTUFFx on Etsy.com

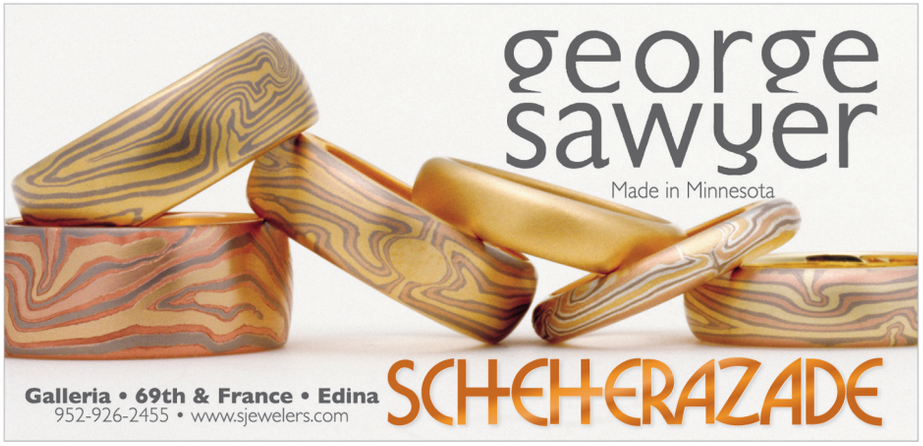




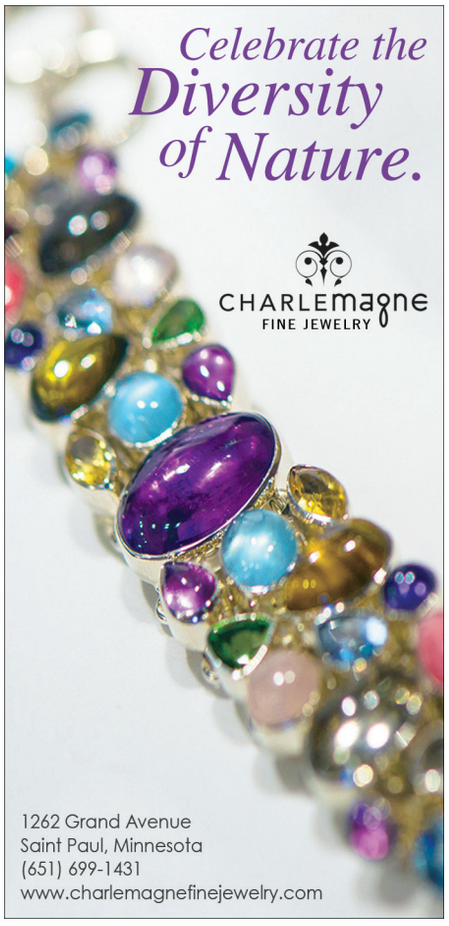












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CONNIE NYMAN & JOANN USHER

Wedding Date: July 18, 2014
Dating Since: October 1991
Location of Ceremony: United Theological Seminary, Bigelow Chapel, New Brighton, MN
Location of Reception: Radisson Hotel, Roseville, MN
Photographer: Krissy McCabe Photography
Wedding Coordinator: Connie & Joann
Florist: Lexington Floral
Cake: Buttercream Cakes & Desserts
Invitations: Handmade by Enchanted Papers (which is our daughter's business)









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LINDSAY RONNING & VICTORIA VARGAS

Wedding Date: August 30, 2014
Dating Since: 2010
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Maple Grove, MN
Photographer: Nylonsaddle Photography
Wedding Coordinator: Lindsay & Victoria
Florist: Donato's Floral
Catering and Desserts: Peg's Countryside Catering
Invitations: Emily Ronning











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JESSICA SHOLD & CANDACE WATSON

Wedding Date: August 9, 2014
Dating Since: April 2012
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Rick Eberts' Farm in Meadowlands, MN
Photographer: Susan Shold
Wedding Coordinator: Jessica & Candace
Florist: Grown by Jessica & Candace
Attire: Jodi Fiske
Cake: Candace's Cousin, Mary Martinson
Invitations: Jessica & Candace
Music: Guitar and Singing by Friend, George Smith

























PAUL THALIN & DUSTIN BERRY

Wedding Date: June 21, 2014
Dating Since: November 2001
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Metropolitan Ballroom
Photographer: Kelly Wilson
Wedding Coordinator: Dustin
Florist: Gail's Shear Magic Mobile Unit
Hair: Gail's Shear Magic Mobile Unit
Cake: D'Amico and Sons
Invitations: Wedding Paper Divas
Programs: Dustin's Sister
Music: Kris Simonson Event Pianist
DJ: Jason Heinrichs aka Anomaly
Linens: Omega Event Services







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TREVOR THOMAS & RUSS MICHAEL

Wedding Date: July 5, 2014
Dating Since: Summer 2010
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Loews Minneapolis
Photographer: DM Photographs, LLC.
Wedding Coordinator: By Couple with Sarah McKee, Loews Minneapolis
Officiant: Rabbi Marcia A. Zimmerman
Florist: Wisteria Design Studio
Attire: Heimie's Haberdashery (Grooms), Men's Wearhouse (Groomsmen, Father), David's Bridal
Hair: Megan Coppock
Cake: Buttercream Cakes & Desserts
Invitations: A Milestone Paper Co.
DJ: Instant Request
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ASHLEY & GINELLE (NEWSTROM) WHITING

Wedding Date: August 2, 2014
Dating Since: February 2009
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Locke Park, Fridley, MN
Photographer: Angela Aird Photography
Florist: Jane From (Ginelle's mother)
Cake: Target
Invitations: Ashley & Ginelle







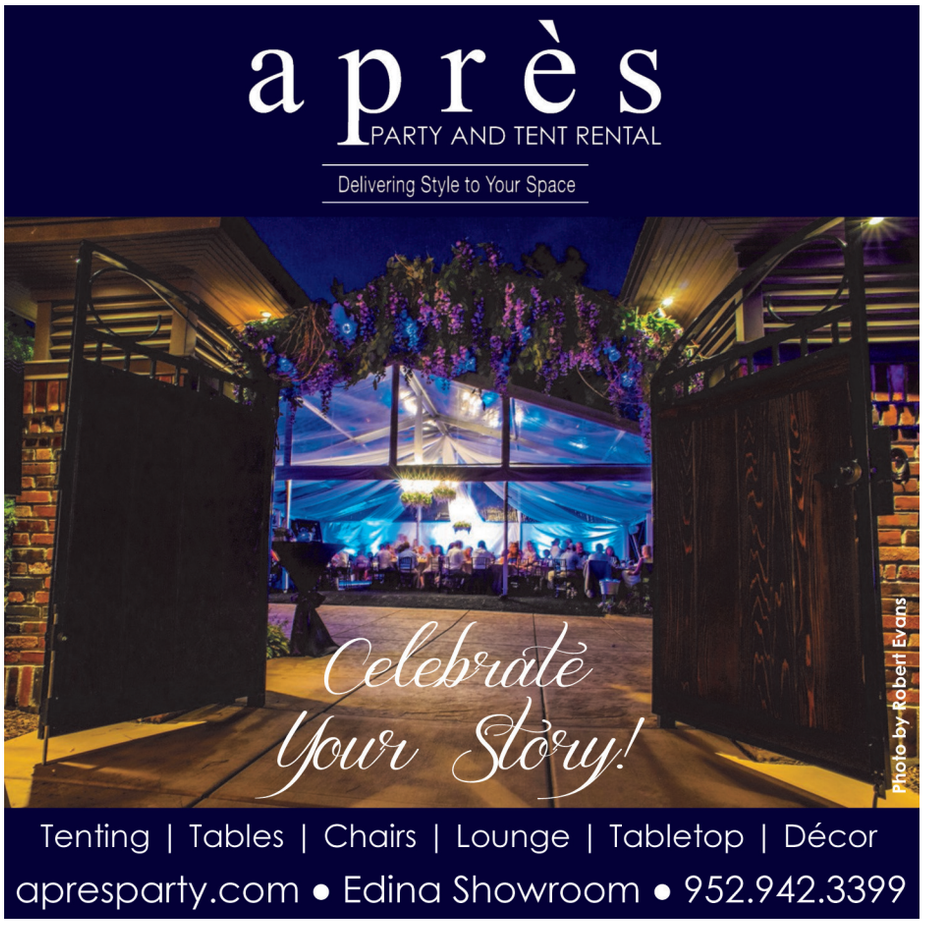




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